

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

COW CREEK AIRSTRIP MECHANIZED GRADING UPPER MISSOURI RIVER BREAKS NATIONAL MONUMENT (UMRBNM) DOI-BLM-MT-L070-2015-0003-EA

Finding of No Significant Impact: Based on the analysis of potential environmental impacts contained in the attached environmental assessment, and considering the significance criteria in 40 CFR 1508.27, we have determined that Alternative #3 (Reclamation by light equipment and local fill dirt) will not have a significant effect on the human environment. An environmental impact statement is therefore not required.

This finding is based on the following reasons. There would be no effect on grazing operations or recreational activities within the project area. There are no historic properties affected by the proposed action. Additionally, there are no National Historic Trails affected by the proposed action. There have been no documented raptor nests within the area. However the area adjacent to the project site to include the road into the area cuts through potential Sage Grouse habitat but there are no known active Sage Grouse Leks or nests within three miles of the project area. Mitigation measures would minimize the disturbance to Sage Grouse by planning the project to occur after Sage Grouse nesting season so there would be little or no effect. In addition, the Cow Creek Airstrip is devoid of any Sage brush and thus not considered Sage Grouse nesting habitat. There are no documented fossil locations within the project area along the Cow Creek Airstrip. Mitigation measures to include identifying a weed free source of fill and a weed free source of native seed mix combined with proper power washing of vehicles and equipment used to complete the project would minimize the spread of noxious weeds so that there would be little or no effect. Proper mitigation for noxious weeds combined with an active restoration of the native grasses will reduce vegetation and habitat loss for wildlife. All other species present are locally abundant and potential impacts would not affect any species locally or regionally. The following aspects of the existing environment were determined not to be present or not potentially impacted by this project include: Air Quality, Cultural Resources, Riparian-Wetland, Recreation, and Visual Resources.

The Upper Missouri River Breaks National Monument was presidentially proclaimed on January 17th, 2001 by President Bill Clinton under the provisions of the Antiquities Act of 1906. As stated in the proclamation, the Monument contains many natural resources on BLM managed land in the Missouri Breaks. From Fort Benton downstream to the James Kipp Recreation area, the Monument

includes 149 miles of the Upper Missouri National Wild and Scenic River, the adjacent Breaks country, and portions of Arrow Creek, Antelope Creek, and the Judith River. The Monument also includes six wilderness study areas, the Cow Creek Area of Critical Ecological Concern (ACEC), and segments of the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail and the Nez Perce National Historic Trail. In the Record of Decision (ROD) and Approved Resource Management Plan (RMP) it states that six airstrips will remain open for private aircraft (planes, helicopters, hot air balloons, or ultralights) to provide opportunities for recreational backcountry activities such as camping, hiking and sightseeing. The landing of aircraft will only be allowed on these airstrips. The six airstrips are Black Butte North, Bullwhacker, Cow Creek, Knox Ridge, Left Coulee, and Woodhawk. Implementation of Alternative #3 proposed in the Cow Creek Airstrip Mechanized Grading EA will allow further protection of these objects identified in the proclamation for future generations to enjoy.



Mike Kania, Monument Manager



Date Signed